



SAUDI ARABIA COUNTRY PROFILE

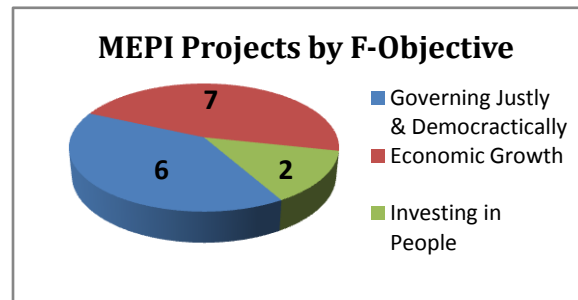
MEPI in Saudi Arabia: Partnering with Government and Citizens

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, MEPI works with the government and local organizations to further Saudi reform initiatives, particularly in the fields of education, advancement of women, and economic development. By strengthening the ties among Saudi and American universities, governmental institutions, civil society organizations, and leading experts, we provide an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to take best practices from the United States and tailor them to the Kingdom's unique needs. Through partnering with Saudi Arabian civil society institutions, MEPI encourages good governance, broader civic participation, and builds capacity to promote respect for and understanding of international norms related to civil society and human rights. MEPI supports the political and civil society institutions that support an engaged and active citizenry. In addition, MEPI is engaged with a number of women's associations and youth organizations aimed at furthering the aspirations of Saudis to expand civic and economic opportunities and to support the King's efforts to move Saudi Arabia toward a more knowledge-based economy.

MEPI's Saudi Arabia Portfolio

There are currently 15 active MEPI projects in Saudi Arabia: 12 multi-country projects including Saudi Arabia; and 3 projects specifically for Saudi Arabia.

The pie chart shows which U.S. Foreign Assistance objectives are addressed by MEPI programming in Saudi Arabia.



MEPI's Partnerships in Saudi Arabia

The U.S.-Saudi Women's Forum on Social Entrepreneurship, launched in 2008, marks the first U.S. - Middle East exchange focusing on social entrepreneurship and involving female students. An introductory seminar in April 2009 on social entrepreneurship brought together more than 100 young women from three Saudi colleges to learn about social entrepreneurship for the first time. All of the participants at the seminar reported an increased commitment to being a social leader following the course. Thirty of the 100 students who participated in the seminar traveled to Babson College in Massachusetts in July 2009 to take part in an intensive social entrepreneurship and leadership training course. They formed teams implementing six social enterprises across Jeddah on a diverse range of topics including rights for the disabled, diabetes, recycling, and volunteerism. In March 2010, the social enterprises will be shared, evaluated and judged at a Social Entrepreneurship Fair in Jeddah led by the students. This innovative program has gathered great support in Saudi Arabia and the positive response has been overwhelming.

MEPI is prioritizing **Saudi Women's Civic Participation** with its new project to develop the leadership abilities and organizational and management skills of current and up-and-coming women civic leaders, including those who intend to participate, possibly as candidates, in future elections. Although women could not vote or run as candidates during Saudi Arabia's first municipal elections in 2005, they have voted and run successfully in non-governmental Chamber of Commerce Board elections. MEPI stands ready to help Saudi women develop the capacity to take advantage of new opportunities for civic participation.

As part of a MEPI local grant project, a community organization based in Dhahran launched an expository writing competition entitled "**Imagine 2020**" enabling Saudi youth between the ages of 16 and 24 to think about their role as leaders in their communities, and giving them a chance to develop their spirit of volunteerism. The competition asked participating youth to write essays answering the question, "How can I turn my passion and enthusiasm into actions that will make Saudi Arabia a country that I'm proud of in the next ten years?" Six outstanding essays were selected from the 170 submissions, and the contest winners were announced at a ceremony in May 2009 in Khobar. Essays discussed topics such as education and curriculum development, the role of women in society, children's rights, and the environment. Some of the essays were posted on the Saudi blogosphere.



Launched in October 2007, the **U.S.- Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research** is working with in-country partners, the **King Fahad Medical City (KFMC)**, and the **Saudi Cancer Society (SCS)**, to raise awareness about breast cancer in Riyadh, Jeddah, Qassim and Dhahran. This MEPI project was developed at the request of Saudi women. As a result of this partnership, awareness of the need for early detection and treatment has increased dramatically, and dozens of community leaders have been equipped with the advocacy skills necessary to increase public understanding of this disease. Notably, following the launch of the Partnership,

the number of women receiving breast cancer screenings at the Abdullatif Cancer Screening Center in Riyadh increased almost fivefold, from an average of 6 to more than 25 patients a day. The Partnership has had a lasting and direct impact on more than 1,500 women with breast cancer and their families working with KFMC, the largest medical complex in the Middle East.



The **Saudi Judicial Engagement** project aims to recognize the importance of a modernized judiciary in an increasingly global legal environment. King Abdullah has taken steps to modernize the Kingdom's justice and education systems, and as part of the King's judicial reforms, Saudi Arabia has established specialized commercial courts and granted more autonomy to administrative court officials in sentencing. Developing new courts, building new courts, and training judges will be a generational undertaking. MEPI is accepting proposals to give

Saudi judges an inside look at the U.S. court system and federal government. Activities may include consultations with the U.S. Supreme Court, Department of Justice, federal and district courts, bar associations, and congressional hearings on judicial issues, as part of this ongoing exchange.